

University Avenue Central Corridor Task Force Meeting
May 10, 2007
Central Corridor Resource Center
Meeting Summary

University Task Force members present: Reggie Aligada (co-chair), Julie Causey (co-chair), Marilyn Porter (co-chair), Veronica Burt, James Erkel, Courtney Henry, Jonathan Sage-Martinson, Robert Straughn, Anne White, Joan Grzywinski, Seitu Jones, Bao Vang

University Task Force members absent: Nieeta Presley, Betty Charles, Juan Linares, Richard Kleinbaum, Vatou Her, Byron Moore, Mai Thor, Brian Winkelaar

Staff present: Donna Drummond, Christina Danico, Sarah Zorn, Shawntera Hardy, Va-Megn Thoj,

Others present: Joe Samuel, Karri Plowman, Jane McClure, Karen Lyons, Brian McMahon, Vic Rosenthal, Jo Haberman, Susan Kimberly, Linda Jungwirth, Michael Blaine, Randy Schubring, Dan Kravetz, Dave Von Holtum, Paula Maccabee, Lori Fritts

The meeting was called to order by co-chair Reggie Aligada. He welcomed everyone and introductions of the task force members, City staff and audience members were made. He stated that the goals for the meeting were to discuss the interim overlay and the comments that had been submitted.

Donna Drummond passed out a draft of the executive summary text for the task force to review. She explained that the final product will be a poster-like document with both text and graphics. Members of the task force asked that the document also be available as text only (with a map of the route) so that it is easy to download, copy and distribute.

The discussion of the interim overlay began with an overview, presented by Donna Drummond, of the PED staff recommendation and rationale. PED staff looked at the suggestions of others, how they compared to the *Central Corridor Development Strategy* and developed a recommendation. She explained that the topic areas were concepts to be discussed and that the language in the ordinance would be much more specific, and would include a map and a list of affected property identification numbers.

The area of change was clarified as the area roughly proposed by Urban Strategies and revised so as not to partially include or exempt portions of parcels. The station areas include those parcels that are within *both* the ¼ mile radius and the area of change boundary; this was done to exclude single family residential areas from any interim requirements. As written, the interim overlay would apply to all new construction and additions; the application to additions may need further exploration as many small businesses interested in expansion may not be able to meet overlay requirements.

Donna explained that the interim overlay would be in place for one year while the city undertakes a study of existing and future zoning for the Central Corridor. She stressed that this is *not* a moratorium on development and acknowledged that the city had only used interim overlays in the past as moratoriums. The proposed overlay is conservative and is designed to test basic requirements, which will help while conducting the zoning study. Once the overlay is introduced to the City Council, it will go through 4 readings, but can be enforced following the first reading and approval of a bridge resolution.

The task force decided to go through the topics and incorporate the comments that were received. The points discussed and comments made follow.

Area of Change:

- St. Anthony Park Community Council is interested in extending the boundary to Territorial to the north and I-94 to the south. This is in conformance with the area's plan and protects properties from the pressure to change use.
- The St. Anthony Park plan has yet to be reviewed by the Planning Commission or adopted by the City Council.
- The St. Paul Port Authority wants to protect industrial land and job sites and "do no harm" to these.
- The City is currently undertaking a study of industrial land as part of the Land Use Plan update; the City will look at the Development Strategy (CCDS) to guide zoning decisions in this area.
- The letter from Court International cites Minneapolis' loss of industrial land and doesn't want St. Paul to make the same mistake.
- Task Force priorities that were identified at the Apr. 12 meeting: 1st was ensure existing businesses are not displaced, and; 4th was ensure that LRT is an impetus for new jobs.
- Interim overlay will regulate form, does not change zoning or dictate use (except for the restriction on auto-oriented uses within ¼ mile).

Floor Area Ratio:

A discussion of FAR requirements brought up that businesses who want to expand and couldn't meet the requirements could apply for a variance, which takes approximately 6 weeks, under the regular city process.

- The possibility of allowing additions that don't fully meet the requirements if there is no increase of non-compliance.
- FAR could include the provision of public art.
- FAR and building height minimum are restrictive in combination; 2 stories doesn't work for some businesses.
- Some businesses may not be appropriate at station areas if they can only be one story.
- Federal Transit Administration emphasizes land use regulation as part of the competitive funding requirements for LRT. St. Paul is currently at a "medium" and the FTA has said the City needs to work on more transit oriented, intense zoning, especially at station areas.

The question was raised as to whether the interim overlay would apply to Western and Victoria because they are potential station areas and the entire corridor needs to intensify; as proposed at this time the overlay would not apply. There was a general concern regarding resale difficulties and the requirement of subsidy to get LRT that was being overly burdensome on business owners. Susan Kimberly, St. Paul Chamber of Commerce, commented that the CCDS is the "right vision at the right time" and that the majority of the changes that will occur in the corridor will be the result of hundreds of different investment decisions that at certain points along the way will not meet the requirements set forth. Lori Fritts, Midway Chamber of Commerce, pointed out that this project has to have both state and local support; it has state support but have to be careful when it comes to local support. The government can avoid risks that small businesses cannot, which could result in a loss of support. Some comments addressed Home Depot and were concerned that, if subject to requirements, it may delay construction and affect potential jobs. It was made clear that Home Depot would not be affected by the overlay because plans have already been submitted to the city and are in process.

It was suggested that developers actually prefer higher standards because they increase their comfort level in terms of what can be built next door or across the street; they prefer security and

consistency. Zoning doesn't necessarily have to be the solution for problems on University Avenue; there are other strategies that can be explored.

Parking Requirements and Placement:

- A reduction in parking requirements can make it easier to achieve a higher FAR.
- The combination of increased density and placement of parking are sometimes hard to make work together; variances are easier for larger retailers to pursue than smaller businesses.
- The parking requirement should be lowered even further to a minimum of 50% of requirement to a maximum of 70% and 1 space per dwelling unit.

A list of questions for PED to further explore is as follows:

- Appropriateness of holding the corner, design guidelines and other issues that apply to parcels within the station area but do not front University Avenue.
- Vary design requirements or provide more flexibility in the ordinance to allow the opportunity to look at individual parcels to see if standards should apply.
- Amend requirements so existing buildings are not subject to FAR requirements as written but they also cannot increase their noncompliance, i.e. $\text{New FAR} \geq \text{Old FAR}$; existing businesses have made the investment in University Avenue and need to be able to grow.
- Other topics could fall under a no increase of noncompliance requirement.
- Interested in PED comment on St. Paul Chamber document regarding auto oriented uses at station areas.
- Uses requiring a drive-through.
- Exemption of single family or residential areas and institutional uses from the overlay.

The task force decided that the next meeting would be used to make a decision and to develop a specific recommendation regarding the interim overlay.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:10 p.m.

Meeting summary prepared by Sarah Zorn, PED planning staff.